23 AUGUST 1991 | ISSUE 119

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- 1988 DAF 2300/Duple 340, WC, TV/Video, Radio/PA Seats 53
- 1988 Duple 425, Db/Glaz, Telma, Econocruise, WC, Kitchen Seats 53
- Bedford/Duple, Radio/PA Seats 57
- 1987 DAF/Caetano II.6, Radio/PA Seats 53
- 1985 Neoplan/Skyliner, TV/Video, WC, Kitchen Seats 77

Setras

- 1989 S 215 HRI (Rational), WC/Kitchen, Retarder, ABS, Many extras (warranty) Seats 49/53
- 1989 S 210 H (Real), WC/Kitchen, Retarder, ABS, Many extras Seats 28
- 1988 S 215 HRI (Rational), WC/Kitchen, Retarder, ABS Seats 49/53
- 1983 S 215 HD (Optimal), WC/Kitchen, Driver's bunk TV/Video, Retarder, Many extras (warranty) Seats 49
- 1983 S 215 H (Optimal), WC/Kitchen, TV/Video. Retarder, Many extras (warranty) Seats 49

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VOLVO 1986 (AUG) B10MT (TANDEM) VAN HOOL ALIZEE-SH 12M, 49 recliners,

grey/red moquette, rear toilet, driver's berth. courier seat, curtains, fridge, drinks machine, wired for T.V. + video, all white.

M.O.T. APRIL 1992

DAE 1986 DKEL PLAXTON PARAMOUNT

3500 12M, 49/53 recliners, grey/red moquette, demountable rear sunken toilet, continental exit door, courier seat, curtains, power entrance door, wired for TV/video, cream/duo blue.

M.O.T. FEBRUARY 1992

VOLVO 1986 B10M PLAXTON PARAMOUNT

3500 12M, 49 recliners, sunken toilet o/s rear, courier seat, curtains, fridge, water boiler, tinted side windows, beige/blue moquette trim, white + yellow/orange stripes.

M.O.T. FEBRUARY 1992

BOVA 1988 FUTURA FHD 12.290 INTEGRAL 12M, 49/53 str (44/48 recliners 5 fixed at rear), duo red moquette, centre sunken demountable toilet, continental entrance/exit door, driver's berth, double glazed tinted side windows, curtains, power operated entrance door, courier seat. white/beige/orange.

M.O.T. FEBRUARY 1992

BOVA 1983 FUROPA ILINTEGRAL 12M 53 str, (48 recliners + 5 fixed at rear) in brown moquette, courier seat, curtains, power entrance door, Webasto heating, white/red.

M.O.T. FEBRUARY 1992

LEYLAND 1985 TIGER 245 DUPLE LASER S 11M, 51 str, autumn tint moquette, armrests, power entrance doors, destination

equipment, red/gold. MOT FERRUARY 1992

ALITY QUALITY

BOVA 1985 FUTURA FHD 12.280 INTEGRAL 12M, 49 str, red moquette (44 recliners + 5 fixed at rear) centre sunken toilet, continental door, driver's berth, drinks machine, fridge, Webasto, power entrance door, double glazing, courier seat, curtains, wired for TV/video, twin fuel tanks, white/red.

M OT JULY 1992

DLVO 1985 B10M BERKHOF ESPRITE

HIGH-LINE 12M, 49 str (44 recliners + 5 fixed at rear), beige/brown moquette, centre sunken toilet with continental door TELMA retarder, Webasto pre-heater, driver's berth, courier seat, power entrance door, all white

M.O.T. OCTOBER 1991

VOLVO 1983 (AUG) B10M BERKHOR

PRITE HIGH-LINE 12M, 49/53 recliners, autumn moquette, demountable toilet continental door, TELMA retarder, cream.

M.O.T. FEBRUARY 1992

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DAF 1987 DKVL PLAXTON PARAMOUNT 3500 12M, 51 recliners, red/grey moquette, rear sunken toilet, continental entrance/exit door, tinted side windows, curtains, courier seat, drinks machine, power entrance door, wired for T.V. +video, TELMA retarder, ABS anti-lock braking, cream duo blue.

M.O.T. APRIL 1992

DAF 1983 DKFL VAN HOOL ALIZEE-H 12M,

48 recliners, brown moquette, rear floor mounted toilet, continental entrance door. Webasto heating, driver's berth, power operated entrance door, courier seat, curtains, wiring for T.V./video, white/grey/red.

MOT FERRUARY 1992

TRADE DESCRIPTIONS ACT;

In detailing these used saloon coaches we have quoted the year of registration and not ssarily the model or year of manufacture.

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1985 (B) Volvo B10MT 3 axle twin decker. Berkhof Emperor 64 Vogel recliners, radio, P/A cassette, Webasto, hot drinks unit, drivers bunk and courier seat. MoT 31/1/92.



1986 (C) Scania K112TR 3 axle double deck. Berkhof Eclipse, 76
Vogel recliners, radio P/A cassette, Webasto, twin-courier seat, hot drinks unit, refrigerator, Telma, toilet. These coaches were completely retrimmed two months ago. Choice of two MoTs 10/2/92, 13/3/92. One sold







1988 (F) Volvo B10M Caetano Algarve, 49 recliners, radio P/A cassette and video, centre sunken toilet, hot drinks unit, courier seat, continental door, MoT 26/7/92. 49 recliners, radio P/A cassette, continental exit, hot drinks unit, moT 2/11/91. New MoT could be arranged.

1988 (E) DAF MB230 Caetano Algarve, 49 recliners, radio, P/A cassette and video, rear sunken toilet and continental door, hot drinks unit, courier seat, MoT 4/5/92.

1988 (E) DAF MB230 Caetano Algarve, Superhigh, 51 recliners, radio, P/A cassette and video, centre sunken toilet, drivers bunk, hot drinks unit, courier seat, continental door, MoT 5/4/92. This coach has been completely retrimmed in the last two months (illustrated).

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News

OBITUARY Graham Harris

It is with great sadness that we report the death of Graham Harris, proprietor of Harris Super Coaches of Bromsgrove, on Monday 19 August, after a long illness. Graham, 62, was known and liked throughout the industry and could usually be seen at rallies, auctions and exhibitions. Always more interested in running comfortable coaches than fleet standardisation, he bought a wide variety of high

specification vehicles.
Consistently jovial despite several serious illnesses,
Graham invariably saw his tour parties off personally and was always keen to talk about the state of the industry he loved. We offer our sincerest sympathy to his widow Nina and family who will continue to run the business.

Emission check training

Checks on vehicle exhaust emissions become mandatory as part of the MoT test from 1 November. Goods Vehicle Testing Stations in Scotland. in conjunction with the Vehicle Inspectorate and the Retail

AVE Berkhof re-locate

AVE-Berkhof have relocated to new premises in Bracknell following launch of their Excellence range of bodies to the UK and the curtailing of Alder Valley Engineering's operations. The new site is more coveniently located, adjacent to both M3 and M4 motorways and is better suited for the expansion of the sales, parts and service departments.

The company has taken orders for 23 new vehicles for this year and is on target for achieving sales of over 30 coaches. The new telephone number for coach sales is 0344-861767 but the existing Aldershot numbers of 0252-313646 or 334484 will continue for parts and service until later in the year.

Motor Industry Federation, are offering comprehensive training packages on the new standards and checks.

The package includes a four hour training course, a de-tailed manual and an instruction video at a cost of £60 per person. A number of available dates are scheduled and those interested in attending should contact their local GVTS for further details. The courses will be held at Bishopbriggs, Keith, Lochgilphead, Montrose, Perth and

Murray moves back North

Murray Shepherd, operations manager with Stevensons of Uttoxeter, is moving back to his native Edinburgh to begin a bus service of his own. Using two Alexander Y type bodied Leyland Leopards purchased from Northern Scottish, he will be operating a commercial service linking Oxgangs with St Andrews Square, Edinburgh.

The service commences on 2 September and will be in direct competition with both Lothian Region Transport and Eastern Scottish. The vehicles will be painted in a pillar box red and cream livery and run from premises at Murrayburn Road, Longstone, Edinburgh.

East Lancs midis

Drawlane's coachbuilding subsidiary, East Lancs, is in the process of acquiring the necessary tooling to construct mini and midibus coachwork. This would add to its already extensive range of products which include new bodies on new chassis, rebodies on existing chassis, refurbishment of existing vehicles and the National Greenway, a complete reworking of the Leyland National which promises a second life of at least 10 years.



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News

DVLA **Custom Marks**

The Driver and Vehicle Licencing Agency (DVLA) are making available A and H prefix number plates for those wishing to personalise older wehicles. Sold as Custom Marks, via the same 0734 757575 telephone line used for Select Registrations, A prefix registrations can be assigned to vehicles registered since 1

August 1983 and H prefix marks to vehicles registered since 1 August 1990.

Registration marks incorporating numbers in the 1 to 20 range with any three letters excluding I,Q and Z are available providing DVLA approve the combination. Name spelling marks such as A 2-20 SUE and H2-20 BOB cost £620 as do plates such as A 1 ABC and H 1 HHH. Cheaper are plates like A 2-20 ABC and H 2-20 HHH at £130.

Bryan Constable, MD of Selkent, replies to a news item in Issue 117, 9 August 1991.

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Yours sincerely Bryan D Constable MANAGING DIRECTOR

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1986 VOLVO B10M GL Van Hool Alizee H 53 reclining seats, Crew seat, Telma retarder, Blinds to windows. Double glazing, Webasto, Plug door, Moquette to roof.



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News

Plaxton to launch Paramount successor

Plaxton has spent £3,500,000 on developing and testing a new body design which is to be unveiled at Coach & Bus '91 in October. Plaxton have revealed that, 'innovative materials' are to be used in its construction and wind tunnel tests show it to have the lowest drag coefficient figure of any coach produced in Britain. No name has yet been given to the vehicle which will replace the current Paramount. A full range of chassis and height options is to be made available.

Plaxton has long wanted to attack the European market and intends to do so with the new body. The company claims that orders for left hand drive vehicles are already in build.

Neil Beresford, managing director of Plaxton's manufacturing division said, 'The interior and exterior styling of



An artist's impression of the 3500 version of Plaxton's, as yet un-named, new coach design which will spearhead the company's attack on the European market.

these vehicles will set new standards for European coaches. Add to this exceptionally high build quality, a structure which meets the ECE R66 roll-over requirement and innovative design features, and it is clear that the new coaches will not only be market leaders in Britain, but will quickly establish Plaxton's presence in selected markets in mainland Europe.'

Ikarus for Boro' line

Maidstone Boroline placed four new Ikarus bodied DAF SB220s into service on 1 August. Managing director, David Coupland told B&CB, "We opted for the Ikarus after quite a lengthy period of decision. We certainly wanted the

SB220 chassis but it was difficult choosing between these and the Optare Delta. In the end the Ikarus deal was made very attractive by Hughes DAF and we are extremely pleased at the way they have been received. The drivers like them and the passengers love them. Already we have had several letters from the public praising the new buses."

Boroline's DAFs are equipped with 50 individual bus seats and have provision for 24 standee passengers. The floor is flat, being slightly ramped to avoid a step into the rear saloon and the low, wide front entrance doors offer easy access. Two pairs of front seats face the rear, allowing more legroom for a priority seating area and there is a luggage pen adjacent to the entrance.

Jardine strengthen team

Jardine Insurance Brokers Ltd has appointed Richard Cochrane as a consultant on bus company management issues to strengthen their services to the industry. Formerly corporate services executive with GM Buses, in the run up to deregulation, Richard was responsible for management services and assisted in the planning and development of a new management structure as the bus operations became separated from GMPTE. He has also held senior positions within GM and SELNEC.

New Mercedes Benz 0404

Mercedes Benz is to replace the 0303 range of coaches with the new 0404 series of vehicles. Built entirely of recycleable materials, the 0404 range will consist of three single deck height options and a 12 metre double decker, the first time Mercedes Benz have offered a double deck coach. The single deckers will be available in 9.2, 10.8 and 12 metre versions.

The 0404 will be offered with a variety of new generation Mercedes Benz engines including; the six cylinder OM401LA (200kW/ 272bhp), the OM401LA V8 (213kW/ 290bhp), the OM441LA (250kW/ 340bhp) and the eight



The 0404 design, which will replace the Mercedes Benz 0303, the best selling European coach ever.

cylinder OM402LA (280kW/381bhp). The double decker will have the OM442LA with a choice of either 320kW/435bhp or 370kW/503bhp power outputs and the GO210 eight speed gearbox. The standard single deck coach will have the GO4160 six speed manual transmission with EPS.

Among the features of the

new coach are a drag coefficient figure which is said to be 30% less than the 0303, double glazing throughout, a new design of Mercedes built seat, and both ABS and ASR as standard. The 0404 will not be available in the UK until the end of 1993 and is likely to cost in excess of £150,000.



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Buses For All

Week two of Bus & Coach Buyer's two part focus on transport for people with disabilities.

Stuart Jones continues a conversation with

Andrew Braddock

Head of London Transport's Unit for Disabled Passengers.

In an overall sense, how does transport provision for people with disabilities in the UK compare with Europe and the rest of the world?

It is very difficult to make direct comparisons because all done different things. It is probably fair to say that the Swedes have always been ahead of the rest of us, a much more socially conscious country, and probably one with a lot more money over the years. It is interesting note that Stockholm Transport's Unit for Disabled Passengers was started in 1967. The Swedes have done things rather differently with a tendency to concentrate on door-to-door transport geared to the more severely disabled members of the population. Not very much has been done on the buses and trains to help ambulant disabled people.

In America the whole thing has been taken over as a rights issue, reflecting that awful period the Americans went through at the end of the Vietnam War, with large numbers of young, male, articulate, quite argumentative people confined to wheel-chairs because of their injuries. Their movement has carried the Americans into a legislative framework, both through the 1970s and last year with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), all of which has called for, and concentrated on, wheelchair access. So in America we have a where large numbers of buses have been fitted with wheelchair lifts, which hasn't helped the very much larger number of ambulant disabled passengers who still face difficulty getting on



Andrew Braddock.

and off buses with high floors.

The other problem the Americans have discovered is that lifts are very expensive, inherently complicated and when used relatively infrequently have a tendency to break down. Whilst there are good examples of the system working well in America, it is acknowledged to be a very expensive solution and they have now realised it does nothing to help non-wheelchairbound passengers. One of the problems with this approach is the time taken to get even one wheelchair passenger on and off the bus. Unfortunately there have been examples of able bodied passengers complaining about delays to services as a result.

The third example of contrasts is Germany which was quite late into the field, so far as recognising the problems disabled passengers face, but quite quickly finding the best

solution - the low floor bus. Now running in several German cities these are generally full sized vehicles with a floor height of 300 to 320mm above road level, so beyond the entrance and exit there are no further steps. The floor is flat and level, at least between the front and middle door, and therefore over half the length of the vehicle. With a kneeling capability the first step height is reduced to about 240 to 250mm which the DiPTAC research has shown over 80% of ambulant disabled people can cope with.

What is even more significant is that all the able bodied passengers get on and off these buses so much more quickly as there are no steps.

The third and not the least benefit of the low floor bus, is that you can provide simple, efficient wheelchair access. You don't need a lift and if you could guarantee the bus could pull up close to and parallel with the kerb you probably wouldn't need any further aid, but sensibly these buses have an electrically operated ramp which bridges the gap be-tween the door and the pavement. Most German systems allow access for mothers with baby buggies and people in wheelchairs through the centre door and they accept that it is in their commercial interest to let those groups of people travel free. If they file past the driver they slow the whole service down which will make public transport less attractive. A commendable, if rather different, interpretation of 'commercial interest' than the UK view. There is a priority area adjacent to the centre door where there are no seats and mothers with baby carri-



Andrew Braddock believes there are commercial benefits to be gained from operating buses which take account of the needs of passengers with disabilities. This is the Mercedes Benz 0405N with flat floor and kneeling mechan-

ages can stand without having to take their children out, or wheelchair users can travel safely with no need for clamping or for the driver to leave his cab.

The experience in cities like Bremen, with large numbers of low floor buses now running, is that because everybody else is getting on and off the bus so much more quickly, because there are no steps, it doesn't just compensate for the extra time taken by the small number of people in wheelchairs, but there is a saving in end to end running time as less time is spent at bus stops. It also makes it a very much more acceptable proposition for young mums with baby buggies.

I'm very keen that we should test these concepts in Britain and I hope that we can have some trials up and running in London next year. I can see no reason why low floor buses shouldn't work here if they work in Germany and

Holland.

Are there any commercial benefits in being more aware of the needs of passengers with disabilities, and if so what are they?

It is very difficult to make hard pressed, deregulated, privatised, British operators understand it but I believe the more enlightened ones, if they think the issues through, will recognise that the more people you can get to use your bus, the better off you will

If you can keep people who will otherwise leave your buses because they don't like them, they can't get on them,

or they fear falling over in them, for another ten years, that's another ten years income. Even though that income may not be direct, it may come through an increase in your money for concessionary pass funding and so on, it does represent a commercial opportunity. I think the reality dawned on many operators and it is very encouraging to see that when operators buy a new bus, it is almost always fitted with DiP-TAC features. What it means, in my view, is that you are seeing a better quality of bus coming on the road. Enlightened operators are linking the inclusion of DiPTAC features to things like brighter seat moquette to get better looking buses.

One hears scare stories about possible Euro legislation requiring wheelchair lifts to be fitted on all new buses. Is this a real possibility. If so, who is pushing for it?

I think it would be very much a scare story if it was a requirement to fit lifts, it isn't. There's a draft directive going around in the European Commission at the moment. It's very much a piece of social rather than transport legislation that's proposed. I think it will change to take on more of a transport flavour over the next few months but, yes, I think it is likely, particu-larly as the Dutch hold the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and are keen on an initiative to help disabled people, that we will see a directive requiring wheelchair accessibility to all forms of public transport on a staged

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basis. It can't be overnight but it's already clear that what it's aiming at is low floor buses and trams. It's probably fair to say that it's an initiative that's come up through the Social Affairs Directorate in Brussels as part of a common concern that, hopefully, we all have, about integrating people with disabilities better into society.

Do you think there is a point at which a person's disabilities are so severe that they would be better served by a separate transport service?

Yes, we already know in London that about half the users of Dial-a-Ride and Taxicard schemes will always need door-to-door transport because their disability is so severe that they couldn't get to the bus stop or the rail station, assuming that conventional transport was fully accessible. There are many people, certainly in London, who are confined to the four walls at home for the want of accessible transport. If we can take about half of the Dial-a-Ride and Taxicard users onto a fully accessible bus system increasingly and an accessible Underground system, we'll make room for a lot more severely disabled people who genuinely need the door-to-door schemes.

Are the provision of bus services for disabled people and coach services for disabled people the same problem or different problems?

Coaches are always going to be a problem, having high floors. Most coaches have a multiple role. The Canadians have done some interesting work on the best type of lift to get a wheelchair up to a high floor. You sacrifice a bit of seating capacity, it's a much more difficult problem than buses, and there's probably a



The Setra S300N, one of the latest generations of German low flat floored buses.

lower requirement than buses. As long as we've got high floors on our coaches and I think we will have, then we really are stuck with lifts.

Because coaches are not under the same time pressures - they tend not to be on a scheduled service where you want to get them away from the stop as quickly as possible - it's a bit more relaxed so the time consequences of a lift are by no means as great. I believe manufacturers like Plaxton are looking at designs which

include a simple wheelchair lift on a high floor coach.

How much progress has been made in the last five years towards meeting disabled transport users' needs more fully?

I think a great deal, not just in London, although it's clearly been focused in London through this unit and the hard work my predecessor did. I think we've a lot to be proud of in the UK. We've done a lot more on things like colour contrast to help people

with impaired sight. We've done a lot more about handrail layouts and seat spacing than has been done elsewhere. I would very much hope that by following the good examples in Europe in the next five years we will overcome all the remaining problems.

Are buses progressing more quickly or more slowly than other transport forms?

Because it is a whole lot easier with relatively cheap infrastructure like buses to make short term changes, there has been a tendency to concentrate on buses. In London. where we are looking at new Underground lines, they will be designed from day one to be fully wheelchair accessible with lifts from street level to all the platforms. The rest of the Underground is a big problem and it would be difficult to make the whole of the existing network fully accessible. It isn't just about wheelchairs, we're also constantly improving the Underground information systems to help people with sensory impairments.

What else would you like to see happen?

I would like to see a much greater recognition of the importance of public transport. We under-fund our public transport in the UK. We have a terrible tendency to regard public transport, especially by bus, as down market, and in many respects it is. I personally think that the double decker, which is an almost uniquely British proposition, really represents bad news for most of the operating day. There are perhaps four times a day when the thing is full and even then I would argue it is probably not full because people do not like going upstairs and will stand downstairs even when there are



Although they are useful in many applications, Andrew does not see the compulsory fitment of lifts as the answer to mobility problems.

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118/276/ROP

seats available on the top deck. Eighty to 90% of the time it is rolling around the streets offering the passenger a pretty badly designed single decker.

I think we should learn from Europe and throw away this terrible British notion that people will not stand. They will if you give them the right product rather than a Leyland National with half the seats taken out, and have something increasingly like a low floor bus, or at least something with a design for overall capacity - recognising that on relatively short journeys people are perfectly happy to stand. I see no reason why that shouldn't be the new dawn in Britain, I don't think we need double deckers and they are increasingly a symbol of one of our problems.

One of the problems we all see is the lack of investment, very few people are buying new buses. The manufacturers are in desperate straits. I think the Government needs to treat public transport more responsibly, recognising that



Double deckers — do we really need them?

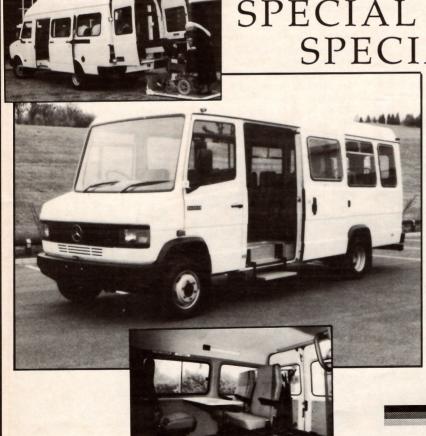
it has an enormous contribution to make, especially buses which can react very quickly to the need to reduce congestion and improve the environment. There really does need to be a serious approach to funding investment in new vehicles. I would be the last person to advocate reintroduction of the old bus grant scheme which enabled manufacturers to put up prices more than they would otherwise have done because we operators were only paying half the cost. It enabled the operator to buy some pretty dreadful vehicles for bus use, including coaches with folding

Bus Grant doors, high steps and a high floor.

I would prefer to see a more sensible grant structure, perhaps on the basis of interestfree loans with a very long pay-back period, perhaps linked to other policies that increased traffic through priority schemes. What I would certainly like to see is a grant which is limited to a very small range of vehicles which would be single deck, low floor and wheelchair accessible, but that would include something of midi size. We all see the mini as too small and there's no reason why we shouldn't have an 8.5 or 9.0 metre low floor wheelchair accessible bus. I think a sensible Government will find ways of funding investment for operators in those vehicles, without having a discredited scheme like the old bus grant.

Andrew Braddock, thank you very much.

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Millers of Cambridge

Miller's Coaches of Foxton, near Cambridge, began mo-destly as Miller Brothers in 1959 using a 12 seater Austin van conversion. Today the company operate a fleet of between 45 and 50 vehicles on continental and UK tours, private hires, contracts, bus services and park and ride schemes. Part of their operation includes special disabled services for which they retain a pair of Plaxton Supreme bodied Bedford coaches equipped with chair lifts and securing points for wheel-

Proprietor Bernard Miller converted the first coach in 1978, based on a commercial idea. The motivation stemmed from the problems he encountered with transporting his own disabled daughter. Bernadette was then around four vears old and the realisation that suitable transport for her would also be of benefit to others in the community, kindled the start of what has grown into a popular local service. The vehicle's workload also incorporates UK and international tours.

A second Bedford was commissioned in 1981 which had the chassis extended to a full 12 metres. This allowed for more spacious seat positioning and reclining seats gave additional comfort. Air conditioning, tinted glazing and Unwin tracking were also



The interior layout provides ample conventional seating and room for securing four wheelchairs.

included in the specification to provide improved facilities for passengers.

Bernard thinks that he may have to consider replacements in the near future but would be less inclined to opt for another full sized coach. He said, 'I think something with around 20 to 25 seats, possibly on a 10 metre chassis, would be quite adequate but with provision for at least four chairs and plenty of additional facilities. A special toilet with wide access doors and room for an assistant would be useful.'

Vernon Sutton, a senior coach driver with the company, who also takes on special

responsibilities for the disabled operations said, 'I think we need to carry a lot more medical equipment and that all drivers should be fully trained in its use. Basic resuscitation units should be mandatory on all coaches, not just for potential passenger emergencies but for when other road accidents happen. For instance, I was in Scotland recently when I came across a crashed car and the occupants needed immediate attention.

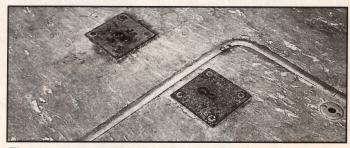
Vernon is a character who excels when handling groups of disabled people. He is experienced in looking after special needs passengers,

having previously worked with Youngs of Rampton who ran a similarly equipped coach. He cares for them, understands how to best communicate with them and treats them with equal respect (or disrespect) to get his message over. Like everyone else they enjoy a bit of fun and will often play up, in their own way.' Vernon recognises that not everyone finds it easy to work with people with disabilities. He said, 'they only see what is on the surface but underneath these are people with feelings and emotions, often intelligent and frustrated. I like to do all I can to put them at ease and keep them smiling. We have a lot of fun on our days out and the passengers appreciate it.'

Popular UK venues are the holiday camps, either Butlins or Pontins, which cater well for groups of disabled people. Tours are based on experience gained from past excursions and no new venues are attempted without researching the facilities thoroughly prior to booking. 'Many more places are now able to deal with special groups as improvements and modern buildings are geared to easier access,' confirms Bernard, 'It takes more time to board your parties, toilet and meal stops are much longer and moving from point to point is much slower. Good facili-



One of Miller's Locomotors bodied Quest 80s currently awaiting a new clutch.



The securing points look rather dated in the older Bedford but the later version is fitted with Unwin tracking for greater flexibility.

ties are extremely important when trying to fit in a full day's entertainment'

Millers two vehicles are kept fairly busy with work from local organisations, hospitals and special schools. Much of it is repeat business generated from previous customers and word of mouth between various disabled organisations. Although Millers are located fairly close to Papworth Village Settlement, there is little work from there as the organisations are fairly self sufficient with their own vehicles. A new project is currently being negotiated which will involve extensive UK and European touring but Bernard wants the details kept under wraps for the time being. If the operation gets off the ground it would mean more immediate purchases of special vehicles and offer a more lucrative prospect for the fu-

Bernard claims they do not reap much in the way of financial reward from the current operation but it pays its way. Unlike some businesses that saw offering special facilities as a way of being more profitable, Millers often charge less than normal rates.

Bernard also feels that, to offer lower floors and easier access, service buses should not be built on conventional chassis. Millers' bus fleet includes a number of Leyland Lynxes which have proved very acceptable but are really too big to operate comfortably on the narrow congested streets of Cambridge. Andrew Miller, Bernard's nephew



One of the Bustlers showing the awkward step arrangement that is not conducive to easy access. When used at Heathrow they were supported by a lift equipped Ford Transit for passengers in wheelchairs.

said, 'We have a couple of old Quests that are ideal for the job, its a shame they are such pigs to work on. Both are out of commission at present because I need to have spares specially made and I'm waitfor new clutches. ina However, they have very low floors and a ramp that slides out to make a bridge between the kerb and the entrance. There are some good ideas in the design but the total package leaves a bit to be desired.

Vehicles which are contrary to high levels of acceptance are also operated by the company alongside the more passenger friendly Lynxes and Quest 80s. They are not too popular with drivers or passengers but fill the gaps when other buses are being repaired or serviced. Some ex Ralphs Plaxton Bustler bodied Fords have four entrance steps that are incredibly steep, with little depth, offering passengers a mountaineering exercise just to climb aboard. Originally used at Heathrow airport, these Fords

have a front entrance and centre doors on both the nearside and offside.

The problem is that like most other operators, Millers have to spend prudently when buying vehicles for bus work. Levels of return and competitive tendering mean it is not possible to run an up-to-theminute modern fleet and less than satisfactory buses are often all that is available at an affordable price. Vernon said, 'Fortunately, the majority of passengers are able to cope with the vehicles, particularly on the park and ride. The drivers will always help but the high frequency means that another more easily boarded bus, probably one of a number of recently acquired Wadham Stringer Vanguards, will be following behind. Passengers should not have to wait many minutes before we can accommodate them somehow.

The total fleet comprises a complete mixed bag of chassis manufacturers and body types. It includes vehicles for all purposes and

can cover any form of private hire requirement. A pair of minicoaches, one Mercedes and one Renault, were purchased following requests for small group executive travel but these are underused by comparison with the rest of the fleet. Bernard explained, 'We had a lot of enquiries for small, executive type transport and purchased the vehicles to comply with the demand. As soon as we had them, the enquiries dwindled and now they are not really busy enough.'

Millers appear to have built a sound and varied business that encompasses every aspect of a modern coaching operation. The retention of disabled tours and excursions, although not fuelled by profit margins or great financial reward, shows they have a human and understanding face which is not easily maintained in these times of economic recession that are affecting the whole industry.



Millers coach fleet includes this Van Hool Alizea bodied Scania K92.

by Martin Cole



Miller's 1978 35 seater Bedford showing the centre door and chair lift arrangement.



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BEDFORD YMT PLAXTON SUPREME IV EXPRESS 1980, 53 seater, recent engine replacement, MoT MoT Moy 1992, £7,000 ono. Tel: (0293) 546219 (Sussex).

1979 V registration

BEDFORD YMT DOMINANT II

53 seats, Telma Retarder, pod, Bristol Dome, autolube, MoT April 92, recently re-panelled and re-

1979 V registration

BEDFORD YLQ DOMINANT II

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Tel: 0488 4438 or 0488 57107 evenings

119/1224/BED

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T REG FORD R1114 DUPLE, MoT Sept '92, Telma, power door. £5,500 + VAT. Tel: (0934) 833177

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1992 £6,000 ono

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119/131/VO

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49 rec seats, toilet, hot drinks, TV, video, Telma, recent retrim, resprayed all white, private number plate, ready to work.

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1986 D PANORAMIC INTEGRAL 3000, 49 reclining seats, centre sunken toilet, double glazing, bunk, radio, PA, new test, choice of two£42,500

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1987 D BEDFORD PJK PLAXTON, 29 seater, power door, radio, PA, finished white£17,500

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1986 (C) FORD TRANSIT, 16 seater, power door, MoT March '92.

1986 (C) FORD TRANSIT, 16 seat, coach conversion, MoT March '92

1984 DAF JONCKHEERE. 49 seats, toilet, TV/video, MoT

1984 DAF PP SBR2300 JONCKHEERE, 3 axle, 71 seats, toilet, TV, video, MoT May '91.

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53 seats, radio, PA, new MoT 1985 (B) LEYLAND TIGER CUB, Duple Dominant, 27 coach seats, Allison Auto, power door, choice of 2. New MoT's.

1981 (W) BOVA EUROPA, 53 seats + courier, radio, PA, power door, MoT Dec '91.

1978 (T) LEYLAND NATIONAL, 49 seats, 22 standees, choice of 2. Long MoTs.



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1ssette, curtains, driver's bunk, *
Jebasto, twin alt, speed limiter, * elma, ferry lift, MoT Feb '92..**POA** *

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78 BEDFORD, 53, Duple II, tested.

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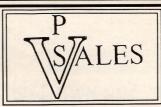
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Plaxton Supreme III's and IV's, 53 seats, long MoTs, clean and tidy motors, choice of 4 £7,000 each ono 1981 MERCEDES 508D, 19

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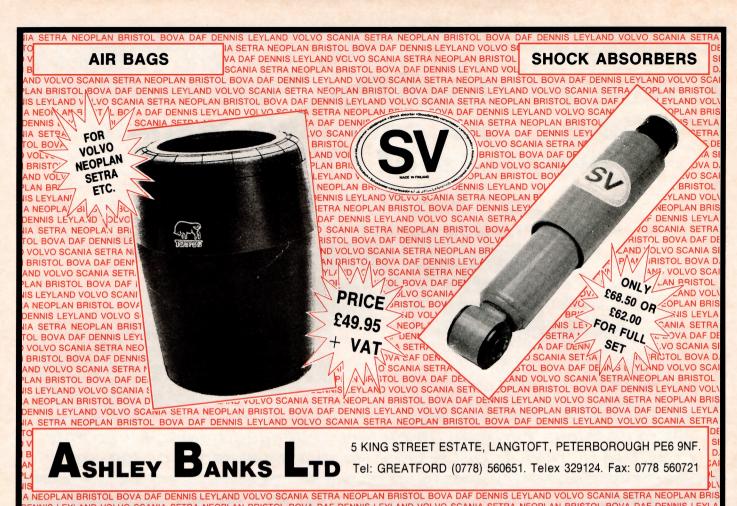
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